

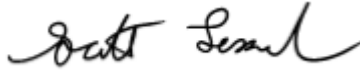
Determining Dispatcher Performance Measures in the North Kingstown Fire Department

Scott Lessard

North Kingstown Fire Department, North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: 

Date: 2/25/2019

Abstract

The problem was that in recent history, the position of fire dispatcher in the North Kingstown Fire Department had gone through several staffing models that may cause inconsistent performance. The current model involves staffing dispatch as a bid position for members at the rank of firefighter in the department. This has caused high turnover and raises concerns with the performance and consistency of dispatch services provided by the department. The purpose of this applied research project was to find ways to increase the consistency of performance of fire dispatchers in the North Kingstown Fire Department. Descriptive methodology guided the following research questions: (a) What are the perceived factors involved with evaluating the performance of fire dispatchers? (b) What are the perceived factors involved with evaluating the consistency of fire dispatchers? (c) What are the nationally recognized practices and principals of fire dispatcher performance? The elements of call handling time and the time it takes a dispatcher to collect the location, nature, call back number and alert units were recorded for a random sampling of calls during the calendar years of 2017 and 2018. The data was then combined with the information collected in a dispatcher survey that asked members to self-report their experience working in dispatch and their level of training. The data showed little correlation between year of service and call handling times. However, a dispatcher's attendance to a nationally recognized training course was found to have a positive impact on call processing times which were 12% faster than other dispatchers. Subjective comments left on the dispatcher survey requested more initial training for dispatchers. The recommendations to improve dispatch services following this study included: (a) nationally recognized dispatcher training, (b) increased dispatcher training hours, and (c) adding a second dispatcher to allow for non-linear call processing.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Introduction.....	5
Background and Significance	5
Literature Review.....	8
Procedures	12
Results.....	15
Discussion	18
Recommendations.....	21
References	23
Appendix A: Combined Data Collection Table.....	25
Appendix B: Dispatcher Survey and Comments	33

Determining Dispatcher Performance Measures

When a member of the public calls the fire department for help the first person that they make contact with is the dispatcher. The ability of a dispatcher to provide quality customer service, gather relevant information and send the appropriate resources is a critical link in any emergency response system. The position of fire dispatcher in the North Kingstown Fire Department is currently filled as a bid position for a firefighter working each of the department's three platoons. This dispatch staffing configuration comes with several benefits but also has its drawbacks and limitations.

Over the past decade, the position of fire dispatcher has had a high turnover rate and is often the bid spot left for the most junior members of the department. The problem was that this observation raises concerns with the consistency of dispatch services and the problem of inconsistent performance in the position of fire dispatcher in the North Kingstown Fire Department. The purpose of the research was to find ways to increase the consistency of performance of fire dispatchers in the North Kingstown Fire Department. Descriptive methodology guided the following research questions: (a) What are the perceived factors involved with evaluating the performance of fire dispatchers? (b) What are the perceived factors involved with evaluating the consistency of fire dispatchers? (c) What are the nationally recognized practices and principals of fire dispatcher performance?

Background and Significance

On June 30, 2004 the North Kingstown Fire Department began staffing the position of fire dispatcher, also referred to as fire alarm operator, with members holding the position of "Line Firefighter" through its execution of a new collective bargaining agreement with the North Kingstown Firefighters Association Local 1651 (Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the

Town of North Kingstown and North Kingstown Local 1651 International Association of Firefighters, AFL-CIO, 2007, p. 29). This ended the long-standing practice of keeping the dispatch position in a separate division and opened it up as a bid position for any line firefighter to bid on during the department's annual bid process. This new provision also expanded the pool of members eligible to work overtime in dispatch from the four members regularly assigned to dispatch to the entire roster of approximately 30 line firefighters.

This change had a major impact on the dynamic of the dispatcher position in the North Kingstown Fire Department. Over the next several years, the position went from a bid spot that was sought by the most senior employees as a place for them to comfortably finish their careers and have access to ample overtime opportunities, to a spot that was given to the most junior employees to occupy until they could gain enough seniority to bid out of dispatch. The consistency of members working the dispatch position also changed from a place where the same experienced members were working in dispatch on a daily basis to a system that allows line members to occasionally work in dispatch to fill vacancies or when swapping shifts. It is now possible to have a dispatcher on duty that has not worked in that position in several years when the need arises making it difficult to train all potential dispatchers to keep their skills up to date. Having dispatchers that are new to the department also creates problems with their level of community specific knowledge. Often times, citizens of the town refer to landmarks like "Collation Corner" or "Christmas Tree Lane" that can't be found on any database or map. These references may be difficult for a new member to process while more senior members can use them to efficiently locate the emergency.

The problem will continue to grow as the position of fire dispatcher continues to become more technical in nature. Over the past ten years the department has moved to a more

sophisticated Computer Aided Dispatch system (North Kingstown Fire Department, 2017-2018) that includes advanced features such as: (a) a link to the Rhode Island E911 Public Safety Answering Point, (b) automated vehicle location services, and (c) bulletin board displays. Other systems have also been added that the dispatcher is required to operate including: (a) a radio master box system, (b) an IP based radio console with patching capabilities, (c) an IP phone system and an instant recall recorder. These systems are all very helpful in assisting a dispatcher in processing information efficiently but they also require a level of proficiency that can only be gained through daily use in order to be used correctly. The impact of this adaptive challenge on the consistency of dispatch services will continue to grow as the technical knowledge required to work the dispatch position increases in the future.

The problem with fire dispatcher consistency in the North Kingstown Fire Department specifically relates to the concept of adaptive change that was covered in the National Fire Academy's R0123 Executive Development course (National Fire Academy, 2016, p. Unit 7). According to Heifetz and Linsky an adaptive challenge is a problem that requires an organization to "learn new ways" and that needs to be solved by "the people with the problem" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 14). This concept holds true with consistency issues that are being experienced by the North Kingstown Fire Department because solving the consistency problem will require the organization to evolve into new ways of doing things that will require a change in the hearts and minds of its members.

The problem was also linked to the United States Fire Administration's (2014) third strategic goal to "Enhance the Fire and Emergency Services' Capability for Response to and Recovery from All Hazards" (p. 1). As the initial public point of contact for the fire department, the fire dispatcher serves as the foundation for an efficient and effective response to all hazards.

By conducting descriptive research to define fire dispatcher performance measures in the North Kingstown Fire Department, this research should serve to improve the response capabilities of the department and help achieve strategic goal number three.

Literature Review

In order to properly assess the perceived factors and performance measures involved with dispatcher performance in the North Kingstown Fire Department, a look at similar academic research that had been previously conducted was initiated. This literature helped establish a base knowledge of dispatcher performance measures and showed several research methods that have been utilized by our study.

In a 2005 study by Kuisma et al., researchers took a look at “Emergency call processing and survival from out-of-hospital ventricular fibrillation” (Kuisma, et al., 2005). This study was conducted in collaboration with the Helsinki Emergency Medical Services and provides a statistical analysis of 373 cases using call processing times, calls per dispatcher, telephone guided cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and patient outcomes (p. 90).

Among other results, this study showed a strong relationship between the number of calls handled by the dispatcher and outcome of patients that suffered from ventricular fibrillation. Once these relationships were established the authors were able to show a significant positive increase in patient outcomes based on the number of calls handled by the dispatcher providing instructions.

When the dispatcher handled only less than four VF calls during the study period survival to discharge was 22.1% (17/77) compared to 38.2% (50/131) and 39.4% (65/165) when

the VF call number was 4–9 or >9, respectively ($p = 0.0227$ for difference in survival between the three groups) (Kuisma, et al., 2005, p. 91).

In a 2016 study titled “*Dispatch Guideline Adherence and Response Interval- A Study of Emergency Medical Calls in Norway*” Ellensen, Wisborg, Hunskaar and Zakariassen (2016) go through a similar process studying the impact of the Norwegian Index for Emergency Medical Assistance when used by the Emergency Medical Communications Centre (EMCC) operators in Norway. This study used an “Observational cross-sectional study based on digital telephone recordings and EMCC records” (Ellensen et al., 2016, p. 1). The study used the following six indicators to analyze calls for assistance: (a) confirmation of caller phone number (b) location, (c) patient consciousness, (e) patient responsiveness, (f) criteria compliance, and (g) communication problems” (Ellensen et al., 2016, p. 2).

These indicators were then used to code telephone recordings collected from participating agencies and then draw statistics from the resulting data. This study found an 80% overall adherence to guidelines for acute and urgent emergency calls and was able to statistically confirm previous self-reported findings that “low overall guideline adherence increases the EMD response interval” (Ellensen et al., 2016, p. 6).

In another article published in 2000, researchers study the factors that contribute to a useful and credible program evaluation (Fine, Thayer, & Coghlan, 2000). This study was conducted in three phases: (a) a national mail survey of non-profit agencies and management support organizations, (b) telephone interviews of a subset of survey respondents, and (c) the development of in-depth profiles for four of the responding organizations (Fine, Thayer, & Coghlan, 2000, p. 332). Together these three data sets were used to draw conclusions about what makes a non-profit program evaluation both credible and useful.

Through this study, Fine, Thayer and Coghlan (2000) were able to conclude that program evaluations that included high stakeholder participation were used to improve program outcomes 92% of the time as opposed to evaluations that included low stakeholder participation that were only deemed useful in improving program outcomes 64% of the time (p. 335). Stakeholder participation was also found to play an important role in the credibility of a program evaluation. “Several respondents (18 percent) also cited the role that increased stakeholder involvement plays in augmenting an evaluation’s credibility” (Fine, Thayer, & Coghlan, 2000, p. 338).

In a 2005 study published by Australian National Training Authority, Smith, Pickersgill, Smith and Rushbrook (2005) explored the factors involved with enterprise adoption of nationally recognized training programs for existing workers. This study conducted focus groups, case studies and a survey of 195 enterprises that were registered training organizations to find out what motivated these organizations to conduct nationally recognized training that the perceived benefits that these organizations hoped to gain from training (Smith, Pickersgill, Smith, & Rushbrook, 2005, p. 9). After conducting this research benefits to using nationally recognized training models were found for both employees and the organizations.

Benefits to the organization include the fact that “Training to nationally recognized standards enabled enterprises to be confident of the skills possessed by the relevant workers” (Smith, Pickersgill, Smith, & Rushbrook, 2005, p. 52). This means that workers in each area will be trained to a level relevant to their needs and that the organization can be assured that adequate skills delivery and assessment took place when using a nationally recognized training program. From the individual workers’ perspective, the adoption of nationally recognized training by their organization “extended the availability of structured training and of qualifications to industry

areas and to groups of workers who would not otherwise have had access” (Smith, Pickersgill, Smith, & Rushbrook, 2005, p. 52).

In a 2000 study Wright and Cropanzano took a look at the effect of psychological well-being and job satisfaction on performance and found “a significant positive relationship was obtained between psychological well-being and composite performance ($r = .34, p < .05$)” (p. 84). This link shows the importance of an employee’s psychological well-being and their reason for being assigned to a role as an indicator of employee performance.

The literature reviewed made five valuable points. First, Kuisma et al. (2005) showed that there appears to be a strong correlation between the number of calls handled by the dispatcher and outcome of patients that suffered from ventricular fibrillation. These findings influenced the current project by showing that variables to account for the frequency that a member works in dispatch and years of service need to be included in the study. Second, Ellensen et al. (2016) give a strong procedure for collecting objective data using digital telephone recordings along with several relevant performance measures. This procedure heavily influenced the research methods used in the current study of dispatcher performance in the North Kingstown Fire Department. Next, Fine, Thayer and Coghlan (2000) show the importance of stakeholder involvement to create a useful and credible program evaluation. These findings influenced the current project by allowing for dispatcher participation in the evaluation process to make sure that the study remains useful and relevant. Next, Smith et al, (2005) show us the importance of the adoption of nationally recognized training programs by organizations. This article influenced the determining of dispatcher performance measures by ensuring that we collect data on dispatchers’ attendance to a nationally recognized training program. Finally, Wright and Cropanzano (2000) show us the

importance of an employee's psychological well-being on performance which influenced the collection of each dispatcher's reason for working in dispatch.

Procedures

In order to properly evaluate the current perceived factors involved with dispatcher consistency and performance, descriptive methodology was used to collect both objective and subjective data about dispatch operations in the North Kingstown Fire Department. First, a random selection of calls from the two-year period was analyzed and coded against a set of standardized performance measures (Appendix A). Run numbers that were generated as the result of the department's radio master box system and calls received on the non-emergency line were excluded as the data collection process for these incidents was much less complex than dealing with a 911 caller and falls outside the scope of this study. A random sample of 365 incidents were taken from the remaining incident list to be analyzed against a set of standard performance measures. This number was statistically significant sampling of the remaining incidents and represents a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of +/- 5%. Randomization was accomplished using the random numbers function in Microsoft Excel to select incidents from the remaining incident list.

Once the incident selection process was complete, incident analysis began with the assistance of the Eventide Logging Recorder. The Eventide Logging Recorder was used to record all emergency phone calls that are processed through the dispatch center. This same system is used to record radio traffic so a consistent time code was ensured as call answering times were compared to the time apparatus are dispatched. The following data points were collected from each analyzed recording:

- Dispatcher ID- this field will contain the dispatcher's badge number so that results can be correlated with data from the dispatcher survey.
- Call Received- the time that the call was answered as noted on the logging recorder.
- Location Determined- time that it takes the dispatcher to determine the location of the emergency in minutes/seconds.
- Phone Number Determined- time that it takes the dispatcher to determine the phone number of the caller in minutes/seconds.
- Nature of Emergency Determined- time that it takes the dispatcher to determine the nature of the emergency in minutes/seconds.
- Units Dispatched- the time that the apparatus alert tones begin for the dispatch of apparatus.
- Call Handling Time- Calculated time interval between the time the call is received and the time units are dispatched.
- Cooperation- Caller's cooperation in answering dispatcher questions. One – Yes (answers questions), Two – No (does not answer questions), Three – Caller Not on Scene, Four – Language Difficulties

All data was collected by the same researcher to ensure consistent rating practices and was recorded on a spreadsheet (Appendix A).

After the data collection for this project was completed the information collected was consolidated into a single table found in Appendix A. This process matched the data points collected from the phone recordings up with the results from the dispatcher survey. Telephone recording data was collected from a total of 365 random emergency calls in 2017 and 2018 that were handled by 33 unique dispatchers. Of the 33 dispatchers surveyed (Appendix B) 30

provided responses which gave us a 90% response rate. One of the non-responsive dispatchers, one had previously retired from the department and was not available to respond, the other two chose not to participate.

After reviewing the 365 sampled phone recordings, 93 recordings were found to be calls from other dispatch centers requesting assistance or medical alarm companies. The dynamic of these calls was much different from that of a 911 caller since data was provided without prompting and call back numbers were not necessary, which skewed the data points significantly. For these reasons those calls were removed from the data set before analysis leaving 272 coded recordings to analyze. An additional variable of the time that the alarm was entered into the Computer Aided Dispatch system was also available from the export of alarm numbers and was added as an additional performance measure.

After collecting and coding data from the dispatch telephone recording system, each dispatcher that handled calls listed in Appendix A received a survey (Appendix B) to collect additional information about their level of training and subjective feedback from the dispatcher about the performance and consistency of the North Kingstown Fire Department dispatch center. Numerical data points were correlated with the other data collected and added to Appendix A. A copy of this survey and its dispatcher comments results can be found in Appendix B. The following data points were collected in the survey:

- Dispatcher ID (Badge Number)
- Years of Service (NKFD)
- Years of Dispatch Experience (NKFD or External)
- Permanently Assigned to Dispatch in 2017 or 2018 (Yes / No)

- NKFD Dispatcher Training Class (Yes / No)
- Outside Dispatcher Training Class (Yes / No)
- Dispatcher Certification (Yes / No)
- Average number of shifts worked in dispatch per month (<1, 1-5, 5-10, >10)
- Reason for working in dispatch (Preferred Position, Forced Due to Bid Seniority, Forced due to Ordering, Light Duty, Overtime Opportunity, Swaptime Opportunity, Other)
- Do you have any suggestions to improve the quality and consistency of dispatching services at the North Kingstown Fire Department? (Free Text)

Several limitations of the study were noted. First, the evaluation of dispatcher performance in this study was limited in scope to a few key objective performance measures that are relatively easy to measure. Other important factors such as customer service and the accuracy of the information provided fall outside the scope of this applied research project. Dispatchers are also asked to self-report their qualifications and the number of shifts worked in dispatch per month. This self-reported data should be accurate, but a more in-depth study might attempt to pull these data points from the department's records management and employee scheduling systems. Unfortunately, combining data from these separate systems was not practical in the timeline that this project was completed.

Results

Three research questions guided this study. The first research question asked: (a) What are the perceived factors involved with evaluating the performance of fire dispatchers? In order to assess the perceived factors involved with performance the variables of years of service and the number of years assigned to dispatch were studied to find how closely they correlate with the time that it takes a dispatcher to collect information from a caller. These results found no

significant statistical link between the performance measures of call handling time, time to enter the call into the CAD system, time to collect the location, nature and phone number and the years of service and time assigned to dispatch reported in the survey. These correlation coefficients can be found in the Table one.

Table 1 <i>Relevant Correlation Coefficients</i>		
	Years of Service	Years in Dispatch
Call Handling Time	-0.0264	-0.0295
Time to CAD	0.0227	0.0361
Time to Location	0.0250	0.0213
Time to Nature	-0.0187	0.0526
Time to Phone	-0.0077	0.1044

The second research question asked: (b) What are the perceived factors involved with evaluating the consistency of fire dispatchers? In order to evaluate consistency, the data collected was compared to the standards set forth in NFPA 1710 (2016). According to NFPA 1710 (2016) section 3.3.53.3, the call or alarm handling time is “The time interval from when the alarm is acknowledged at the communication center until response information begins to be transmitted via voice or electronic means to emergency response facilities (ERFs) and emergency response units (ERUs)” (p. 8). Then in section 4.1.2.3.3, NFPA 1710 (2016) goes on to set a performance measure where it states “The fire department shall establish a performance objective of having an alarm processing time of not more than 64 seconds for at least 90 percent of the alarms and not more than 106 seconds for at least 95 percent of the alarms, as specified by NFPA 1221” (p. 8).

When comparing the sample data that was collected to this standard only 15% of the calls studied had an alarm processing time of not more than 64 seconds and that 66% of calls had an alarm processing time of not more than 106 seconds (Appendix A). These results clearly show

that dispatchers in the North Kingstown Fire Department are not meeting the benchmarks for consistency in call handling set forth by national standards.

The quantitative results from the first two research questions showed a good descriptive snapshot of some of the perceived factors involved with dispatcher performance and consistency but were not able to find a true statistical relationship between performance measures and the perceived factors. In order to dig deeper into the perceived factors with dispatcher performance and consistency the qualitative data from the dispatcher survey must be taken into account.

An important qualitative perceived factor related to dispatcher performance and consistency reported by the dispatcher survey (Appendix B) was the dispatchers' reason for working in dispatch. Of the 30 dispatchers surveyed 13 reported that they were forced to work in dispatch due to lack of seniority or due to ordering when a shift vacancy could not be filled. Four dispatchers reported that they were assigned to dispatch as a light duty assignment and 18 report working in dispatch as an opportunity for overtime or to swap shifts with another member. Other reasons for working in dispatch include: (a) working as a floater, (b) covering while working another position at headquarters where the dispatch center is located, and (c) doing a temporary transfer with a junior member that is forced to be in dispatch to give them a break. The personally perceived factors related to the performance and consistency of the dispatch position from several dispatchers can be found in the comments in Appendix B.

The third research question asked: (c) What are the nationally recognized practices and principals of fire dispatcher performance? The data collected to study nationally recognized practices and principals of dispatcher performance came from surveying dispatchers on their attendance to a nationally recognized dispatcher training program. These national training programs give dispatchers the knowledge, skills and abilities to efficiently and accurately handle

emergency callers and process the information provided to them. Of the 30 dispatchers that responded to the survey (Appendix B), two completed a nationally recognized training program that has only been offered to a limited number of dispatchers over the past decade. The results of the telephone recording analyses show that the average call processing time for a dispatcher that has completed a nationally recognized training program was 12% faster than the average time of a dispatcher that has not completed a nationally recognized training program. This data shows that the nationally recognized practice of attending a standardized training program has a positive impact on dispatcher performance in the North Kingstown Fire Department.

Discussion

After analyzing the data collected during both phases of research, the results were much different than expected since no meaningful correlation was found between the established performance measures and the data collected from dispatchers. In the Kuisma et al. (2005) study they were able to draw conclusions based on the relationship between performance measures and the number of calls handled by each dispatcher but in this case conclusions needed to be drawn based on the fact that there was no relationship as well as some of the subjective data. The fact that there was no relationship between the years of service or time assigned to dispatch and the time that it takes to collect information is actually a positive note for the department showing that consistent dispatch services are being provided.

The next important lesson learned from the data was the importance of having dispatchers attend a nationally recognized training program (Appendix A). The National Academy of Emergency Dispatch training class was offered to a small subset of dispatchers serving the department. The members that attended this program were going through their initial training when the class was offered and the data showed that it was beneficial to improving data

collection times (Appendix A). According to Smith et al. (2005), “Employees undertaking such training claimed that they gained an improved understanding of their own organization’s policies, values, standards and practices.” (p. 16). All of these factors are important to improving a dispatchers understanding of their work and can lead to improvements in job performance.

The next important data set to look at is the dispatcher survey (Appendix B) was the self-reported reasons for working in dispatch. Despite it being the first option on the survey, not a single dispatcher reported that they worked in dispatch as their preferred bid position. Popular reasons include being forced due to lack of seniority (31%) and working in dispatch as an overtime opportunity (55.2%). The fact that dispatchers are not working in the position due to preference can lead to issues of apathy and makes it difficult to engage dispatchers in their ever-changing technical work environment (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000, p. 84).

The comments left by dispatchers when they were asked if they had any suggestions to improve the quality of dispatching services provided several technical and adaptive challenges (Appendix B) faced in the dispatch center. Some of the comments were looking for technical changes, such as changing the way that the 911 phones ring but others addressed deeper issues. One consistent issue was the need for more recruit training in dispatch before members are allowed to work on their own (Appendix B). Historically dispatchers have received different amounts of training time in dispatch depending on the size of their training class and time allocated to their initial training. Academies with more members tend to allow for less time in dispatch per member as a larger number of members need to be cycled through training time in each position (North Kingstown Fire Department, 2017-2018). One comment (Appendix B) extends this need to allow members not regularly assigned to dispatch periodic time to work shifts in dispatch to maintain proficiency.

One concerning finding of the study was the department's compliance with NFPA 1710 (2016). Results reported that the department's call handling time fell well out of compliance with national standards (Appendix A). This additional call handling time may be due to the way that Rhode Island processes 911 calls at a single Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and then calls are transferred to a local dispatch center where information is again collected by the local dispatcher. It's unclear in the NFPA 1710 (2016) standard if the intent is for the communications center to already have the information collected from the PSAP when the call handling time starts or if the local dispatcher is supposed to collect this information within the 64/90 106/95 benchmark NFPA1710 (2016). This single PSAP model is unique to the states of Rhode Island and New Hampshire and adds an additional step to 911 call processing. The other factor worth noting was that the North Kingstown Fire Department only has a single dispatcher on duty at a time (Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Town of North Kingstown and North Kingstown Local 1651 International Association of Firefighters, AFL-CIO, 2007). This creates a linear process where caller information must be collected and processed before units can be dispatched. This responsibility is often combined with other routine responsibilities of dealing with fire alarm technicians that conduct fire alarm system testing. In the survey (Appendix B) several dispatchers suggested that the addition of a second dispatcher, especially during peak times, would help them perform work more efficiently.

After reviewing all of the relevant findings it appears that the perceived factors related the performance and consistency of dispatcher performance in the North Kingstown Fire Department point to more systemic problems with meeting national standards as opposed to problems with a specific demographic of dispatcher. These problems include: (a) the PSAP to local agency call transfer model in use in Rhode Island, (b) the length of dispatcher training,

offering dispatcher training that meets nationally recognized standards, and (c) the fact that there is only one dispatcher on duty at a time. Many of the changes needed to overcome these problems are technical (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 14) in nature such as adding additional training or personnel to the dispatch center. However, to bring the department in compliance with NFPA 1710 adaptive changes may also be necessary.

Recommendations

The data collected in this study leads to several recommendations that can improve upon the performance and consistency of dispatch services in the North Kingstown Fire Department. The first recommendation was to have dispatchers participate in a nationally recognized dispatcher training program and increase the amount of training time that new recruits have in dispatch before they are cleared to work on their own. The second recommendation was to provide the nationally recognized dispatcher training program to every member serving in the dispatch role. Past on the job training times in dispatch have been anywhere from three shifts to several weeks.

The third recommendation was that new recruits be given at least two 40-hour work weeks in dispatch before they are allowed to work on their own. This number can be adjusted based on feedback from future classes. Both of these recommendations will assist the department in statistically increasing dispatcher performance and reducing liability by showing adequate training levels. The fourth recommendation was that the same national training for dispatchers also be expanded to include existing members that are eligible to work in dispatch periodically. Existing dispatchers will see the same benefit as new members by going through a nationally recognized training program when it comes to lower call handling time. Existing members should also be offered the opportunity to work shifts in dispatch periodically to maintain

proficiency as was reported in the comments sections of the dispatcher survey. Allowing existing dispatchers to work periodic shifts in the dispatch position does not need to come at and additional cost to the town if temporary transfers are used to move members into dispatch and then allow the normally assigned dispatcher to fill their spot. Temporary transfers are covered in the department's collective bargaining agreement so this change may require negotiation with the union.

In order to address the problem of call handling times not meeting the national standards, the fifth recommendation was that a second dispatcher be put on duty to allow for non-linear call processing procedures. By having multiple dispatchers on duty, a second dispatcher could enter the basic call information into the computer system and start to alert units while the first dispatcher is still on the phone collecting additional information from the caller. By allowing tasks to happen simultaneously with two dispatchers, call handling times could be reduced significantly which would help bring the department into compliance with national standards. Adding a second dispatcher does not necessarily mean that a second full time position needs to be created on each shift. The second dispatcher program can be phased in during peak times to help increase call handling times for the majority of calls which can drive the average call handling time down to meet the standard. The existing fire and police dispatch positions can also be combined so that the dispatcher from each discipline would be able to assist the other in processing their respective calls more efficiently. Currently the fire and police dispatch centers reside in the same building and are only separated by a single wall. The actual implementation of a combined dispatch center would need further study to work out logistics.

References

- Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Town of North Kingstown and North Kingstown Local 1651 International Association of Firefighters, AFL-CIO. (2007, July 1). North Kingstown, RI.
- Ellensen, E. N., Wisborg, T., Hunskaar, S., & Zakariassen, E. (2016). Dispatch guideline adherence and response interval- A study of emergency medical calls in Norway. *BMC Emergency Medicine*, 40.
- Fine, A. H., Thayer, C. E., & Coghlan, A. T. (2000). Program evaluation practice in the nonprofit sector. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 331-339.
- Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Kuisma, M., Boyd, J., Taneli, V., Repo, J., Nousila-Wiik, M., & Holmstrom, P. (2005). Emergency call processing and survival from out-of-hospital ventricular fibrillation. *Resuscitation*, 89-93.
- National Fire Academy. (2016, September). Executive development student manual. Emmitsburg, Maryland: Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments. (2016). *NFPA National Fire Codes Online*. Retrieved from <http://codesonline.nfpa.org>

North Kingstown Fire Department. (2017-2018). Computer aided dispatch system data. North Kingstown, RI.

Smith, E., Pickersgill, R., Smith, A., & Rushbrook, P. (2005). *Enterprises' commitment to nationally recognised training for existing workers*. Adelaide Australia: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

United States Fire Administration. (2014). *America's fire and emergency services leader strategic plan fiscal years 2014 - 2018*.

Wright, T. A., & Cropanzano, R. (2000). Psychological well-being and job satisfaction as predictors of job performance. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 84-94.

Appendix A: Combined Data Collection Table

Run Number	Call Handling Time (Seconds)	Seconds to CAD	Seconds to Location	Seconds to Nature	Seconds to Phone	Years of Service	Years Assigned to Dispatch	National Certification	Shifts Per Month
2017-000421	58	48	9	19	30	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000472	81	55	5	32		16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2017-000502	52	44	28	31	38	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000546	127	114	6	51	60	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000652	70	58	8	34	41	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000730	134	123	16	39	62	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000731	51	42	7	15	22	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000804	116	86	5	19	27	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000828	90	14	6	17	60	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000839	178	163	44	66		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-000876	212	185	8	33	46	12	0	No	Less than 5
2017-000995	72	61	12	24	29	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-001048	125	82	5	39	52	12	0	No	Less than 5
2017-001065	226	216	59	80	90	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001068	85	73	8	15	25	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001117	689	637	51	8	70	3	1	No	5 to 10
2017-001122	78	71	11	22	31	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001131	120	112	10	50	59	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-001144	88	77	8	27	36	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-001180	79	60	15	34		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001217	184	159	23	39	71	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001281	151	107	8	28	40	12	0	No	Less than 5
2017-001287	104	90	0	16	25	12	0	No	Less than 5
2017-001317	89	192	25	10	37	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001402	95	61	7	21		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001431	72	46	10	22		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001465	122	103	11	41	64	12	0	No	Less than 5
2017-001466	153	121	10	23	42	12	0	No	Less than 5
2017-001478	63	145	12	30		6	2	No	5 to 10
2017-001483	87	77	6	17	39	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-001490	121	91	16	42		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001529	128	135	16	29	73	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001597	115	104	23	56		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001614	94	83	9	38		3	2	No	More than 10
2017-001624	163	170	15	33	46	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001633	81	67	8	19	34	16	0	No	5 to 10

Run Number	Call Handling Time (Seconds)	Seconds to CAD	Seconds to Location	Seconds to Nature	Seconds to Phone	Years of Service	Years Assigned to Dispatch	National Certification	Shifts Per Month
2017-001635	106	96	21	49	58	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-001709	172	159	5	21	40	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-001737	49	42	5	16	25	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-001748	61	52	10	26	36	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-001750	59	49	6	21	32	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-001764	97	84	7	19	39	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001794	111	101	24	18		3	2	No	More than 10
2017-001838	66	49	11	17	26	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-001864	72	51	6	15	27	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001874	68	58	7	24		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-001913	108	66	12	21	34	3	0	No	Less than 5
2017-001927	79	68	13	32	55	6	2	No	Less than 5
2017-001968	85	72	10	26	42	16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2017-002000	38	60	1	10		3	2	No	More than 10
2017-002098	121	77	6	34	40	12	1	No	Less than 5
2017-002105	65	51	5	13	28	3	0	No	Less than 5
2017-002112	114	62	6	12		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-002223	98	231	-1194	14	32	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-002476	74	65	4	16	33	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-004157	98	84	9	24	37	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004223	121	83	6	14	20	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004255	54	33	12	17	37	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004281	82	69	15	28	36	17	0	No	Less than 5
2017-004304	95	131	11	32	64	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004388	58	95	8	16	23	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004410	108	98	15	32	43	10	5	Yes	Less than 5
2017-004482	102	86	11	21	33	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004496	122	89	9	31	47	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004558	67	55	18	27	32	12	0	No	More than 10
2017-004582	62	51	18	22	26	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004599	114	102	8	28	40	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004660	55	77	12	20		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004677	129	118	17	30	76	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004724	107	90	8	40		16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2017-004731	98	91	25	38		16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2017-004772	78	52	19	28	42	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004792	106	91	16	30	44	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004810	55	42	6	17	22	2	1	No	More than 10

Run Number	Call Handling Time (Seconds)	Seconds to CAD	Seconds to Location	Seconds to Nature	Seconds to Phone	Years of Service	Years Assigned to Dispatch	National Certification	Shifts Per Month
2017-004865	217	207	57	24		3	2	No	More than 10
2017-004885	83	85	10	31	36	17	0	No	Less than 5
2017-004961	91	78	9	39	47	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-004999	138	119	27	76	82	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-005017	103	94	22	12	45	12	0	No	More than 10
2017-005081	112	97	14	61	68	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-005203	72	54	9	22	30	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-005219	56	95	9	16	41	16	4	No	Less than 5
2017-005233	62	44	28	20		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-005277	69	57	9	27	34	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-005307	76	59	9	30	37	2	1	No	Less than 5
2017-005313	96	83	13	22	46	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-005322	216	198	21	16	39	16	0	No	5 to 10
2017-005341	37	109	5	7	17	10	5	Yes	Less than 5
2017-005463	94	77	8	15	25	12	0	No	More than 10
2017-005473	85	73	7	21	38	10	5	Yes	Less than 5
2017-005497	115	81	7	34	50	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-005500	99	84	3	18	31	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-005551	51	74	5	21	13	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000068	180	163	10	59	44	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000082	85	130	16	47	38	3	2	No	More than 10
2018-000171	82	68	6	18	32	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000255	123	109	16	60	25	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000295	87	75	16	35	48	6	2	No	Less than 5
2018-000309	105	92	6	38	20	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000333	65	37	19	17	50	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000433	109	73	10	35	15	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000483	156	124	13	34	52	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000533	57	44	5	15	21	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000620	79	62	12	30	17	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000689	121	115	12	20	40	10	5	Yes	Less than 5
2018-000721	68	58	7	23	30	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000753	120	94	24	18	83	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000848	361	347	10	38	44	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000855	141	130	29	71	80	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-000927	79	55	10	30	18	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001043	80	61	8	30	21	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001073	91	203	18	35	70	6	2	No	5 to 10

Run Number	Call Handling Time (Seconds)	Seconds to CAD	Seconds to Location	Seconds to Nature	Seconds to Phone	Years of Service	Years Assigned to Dispatch	National Certification	Shifts Per Month
2018-001186	186	170	13	33	68	3	2	No	More than 10
2018-001210	117	103	10	24	58	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001221	49	40	7	17	23	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001226	185	173	46	29	58	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001230	82	58	17	11	27	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001272	139	129	19	2	29	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001319	75	60	27	19	37	6	0	No	Less than 5
2018-001367	56	42	7	26	12	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001370	82	70	6	18	24	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001374	95	81	10	22	28	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001557	188	170	8	70	22	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001636	100	86	11	29	15	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001670	77	64	3	21	36	10	5	Yes	Less than 5
2018-001722	72	61	9	29	40	6	2	No	Less than 5
2018-001791	104	67	18	10	39	6	2	No	5 to 10
2018-001824	83	62	12	30	21	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001829	3696	72	26	16	30	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001834	96	85	12	22	31	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001839	88	79	11	18	27	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001947	63	51	7	24	13	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-001995	140	96	34	40	46	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002080	75	67	8	16	33	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002287	91	80	10	26		16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-002359	159	125	17	41		16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-002421	56	128	9	24	38	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002460	57	43	6	12	21	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002525	100	80	35	53	47	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002537	75	60	5	22	8	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002542	69	59	13	39	20	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002558	91	76	14	7	42	16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-002598	121	111	7	33		16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-002623	126	98	23	20	45	16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-005244	30	160	9	23	58	1	1	No	More than 10
2018-005339	97	83	4	12		16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-005396	134	99	29	25	38	3	2	No	More than 10
2018-005489	68	57	4	13	33	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-005617	162	139	20	11	50	1	0	No	More than 10
2018-005618	169	157	23	48	52	1	0	No	More than 10

Run Number	Call Handling Time (Seconds)	Seconds to CAD	Seconds to Location	Seconds to Nature	Seconds to Phone	Years of Service	Years Assigned to Dispatch	National Certification	Shifts Per Month
2018-005654	91	80	15	26	50	17	0	No	Less than 5
2018-005689	114	101	10	20	26	1	0	No	More than 10
2018-005700	132	151	57	62		6	2	No	Less than 5
2018-005712	101	81	6	23	36	1	0	No	More than 10
2018-005802	177	154	27	50		1	0	No	More than 10
2018-005804	87	75	8	12	29	1	0	No	More than 10
2018-005913	132	117	20	44	51	1	1	No	More than 10
2018-005915	93	87	7	31	72	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-005938	103	91	11	35	73	3	2	No	5 to 10
2018-005951	89	78	22	16	48	16	0	No	Less than 5
2018-006048	192	158	62	50	84	10	5	Yes	Less than 5
2018-006166	87	71	7	21	28	3	2	No	5 to 10
2018-006190	71	67	7	22	30	1	1	No	More than 10
2018-006243	92	75	13	9	35	1	0	No	More than 10
2018-006289	37	114	8	16	59	1	1	No	More than 10
2017-000005	93	82	11	15	33	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000044	138	129	9	53	69	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000079	53	42	8	20	24	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000083	125	112	6	56	69	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000086	98	85	17	24	42	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000163	68	52	10	19	26	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000213	73	55	5	17	27	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-000230	79	48	8	24	60	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000238	97	87	9	26	46	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000264	76	57	7	11		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-000308	50	41	9	24	28	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000314	54	38	8	17	24	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000353	64	152	15	26	31	12	0	No	Less than 5
2017-000382	101	91	8	30	40	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000392	69	59	11	20	26	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-000406	112	124	6	58	70	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-000416	68	48	15	37	47	4	1	No	Less than 5
2017-002539	94	82	16	33		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-002601	20	26	1	3		3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-002636	97	87	6	22	38	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-002804	139	109	6	26	39	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-002830	176	160	8	26	56	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-002848	165	156	22	43	95	3	2	No	More than 10

Run Number	Call Handling Time (Seconds)	Seconds to CAD	Seconds to Location	Seconds to Nature	Seconds to Phone	Years of Service	Years Assigned to Dispatch	National Certification	Shifts Per Month
2017-002851	66	57	12	26	34	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-002898	51	37	23	17	28	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-002906	139	133	13	25	70	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-002925	177	165	6	21	97	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-002931	105	229	13	21	36	10	5	Yes	Less than 5
2017-002940	174	161	11	26	36	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-002959	117	104	36	55	82	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-002960	142	105	34	30		4	2	No	Less than 5
2017-002971	86	77	9	30	43	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-003048	84	59	6	22	29	3	0	No	Less than 5
2017-003061	100	79	9	14	20	16	0	No	5 to 10
2017-003076	88	97	40	15	56	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-003085	108	81	67	51	73	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-003087	72	63	8	21	30	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-003098	59	46	6	21	30	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-003124	61	45	5	16		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-003152	131	115	11	38		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-003253	79	63	7	26		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-003280	118	107	8	33	50	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-003367	117	201	18	11	78	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-003404	122	111	9	37	66	3	2	No	More than 10
2017-003410	64	49	25	14	34	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-003667	11	76	0	10		6	0	No	Less than 5
2017-003709	100	83	31	52		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-003755	116	89	12	35	42	4	2	No	Less than 5
2017-003758	54	121	6	25	31	6	2	No	5 to 10
2017-003771	153	147	32	26	49	4	1	No	Less than 5
2017-003816	52	81	9	20		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-003820	127	108	18	10	43	2	1	No	More than 10
2017-003840	98	77	15	22		2	1	No	More than 10
2017-003961	75	113	16	7223	28	3	2	No	5 to 10
2017-004017	137	126	42	35	53	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002681	77	67	8	37		16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-002686	79	70	5	32	37	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002692	97	84	19	14	54	16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-002765	120	110	7	47	56	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-002797	93	65	7	20	25	16	0	Yes	Less than 5
2018-002861	74	59	12	22	36	6	2	No	Less than 5

Run Number	Call Handling Time (Seconds)	Seconds to CAD	Seconds to Location	Seconds to Nature	Seconds to Phone	Years of Service	Years Assigned to Dispatch	National Certification	Shifts Per Month
2018-002869	82	59	11	23	36	1	0	No	More than 10
2018-003009	89	67	11	27	35	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003012	69	53	11	17	28	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003031	181	121	33	67	45	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003043	73	62	22	15	28	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003053	73	59	14	41	18	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003081	77	68	7	38	48	6	2	No	Less than 5
2018-003127	105	94	17	39	47	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003147	93	83	10	16		2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003186	57	43	10	22	15	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003299	94	53	7	26	13	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003318	86	75	7	37	17	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003323	79	67	14	39	21	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003382	97	66	17	40	28	1	0	No	Less than 5
2018-003423	77	57	5	15	23	12	1	No	Less than 5
2018-003513	93	79	11	36	20	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003573	100	89	7	38	49	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003702	94	67	5	21	30	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003792	94	82	28	22	43	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003836	60	98	6	23	41	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003839	89	78	6	34	49	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003912	74	60	7	20	28	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003947	91	82	7	59	72	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-003971	92	83	10	24	45	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004060	90	99	26	34	44	6	2	No	5 to 10
2018-004151	79	56	17	10	24	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004282	395	375	6	46	57	4	1	No	Less than 5
2018-004289	112	98	11	24	42	4	1	No	Less than 5
2018-004329	116	111	4	57	105	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004349	60	48	9	30	15	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004359	77	65	11	20	31	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004361	69	54	12	24	19	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004407	126	102	13	33	62	1	1	No	More than 10
2018-004431	69	56	12	-288	21	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004612	140	120	15	26	45	4	2	No	Less than 5
2018-004638	63	82	7	15	38	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004640	116		50	44	107	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004646	80	75	15	11	19	2	1	No	More than 10

Run Number	Call Handling Time (Seconds)	Seconds to CAD	Seconds to Location	Seconds to Nature	Seconds to Phone	Years of Service	Years Assigned to Dispatch	National Certification	Shifts Per Month
2018-004652	48	40	11	16	21	2	1	No	More than 10
2018-004724	132	116	11	29	38	1	0	No	More than 10
2018-004955	133	114	51	42	62	1	0	No	More than 10
2018-005031	137	121	13	23	28	12	0	No	Less than 5
2018-005068	92	86	6	29	46	1	1	No	More than 10
2018-005083	92	84	14	41		1	1	No	More than 10
2018-005181	124	113	6	19	28	1	1	No	More than 10
2018-005211	86	72	4	26	38	12	0	No	Less than 5

Appendix B: Dispatcher Survey and Comments**North Kingstown Fire Department 2017- 2018
Dispatcher Survey**

This survey is being conducted as part of an applied research project for the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program and is aimed at improving dispatching services at the North Kingstown Fire Department. We ask that you enter your badge number below so that the results of this survey can be correlated with other dispatch data but names will not be used when reporting results. Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey; any questions can be directed to scott.lessard@gmail.com

1. Badge Number

2. NKFD years of service as of December 31, 2018?

3. Number of years assigned to dispatch as of December 31, 2018 (NKFD or Other Agency)?

4. Have you completed the formal NKFD dispatcher training program (classroom and training time in dispatch). This is usually done as part of the NK Fire Academy?

Yes

No

5. Have you completed a dispatcher training program outside of the NKFD?

Yes

No

6. Have you completed a nationally recognized dispatcher certification program?

Yes

No

7. What is the average number of shifts per MONTH that you worked in dispatch in 2017 and 2018?

Less than 5

5 to 10

More than 10

8. What is your reason for working in dispatch in 2017 and 2018?

Preferred Bid Position

Forced Due to Bid Seniority
Forced Due to Single Shift Ordering
Light Duty Assignment
Overtime Opportunity
Swap Time Opportunity
Other:

9. Do you have any suggestions to improve the quality and consistency of dispatching services at the North Kingstown Fire Department?

“Ensure all dispatchers are more familiar with updated SOG’s and all the different signals that can occur on the Vision. Also utilize deputy chiefs when unsure of approach toward unique alarms and Vision messages”

“Get rid of fire department dispatch. cross train pd dispatchers as fire dispatchers and use the 3 former dispatchers as the 3rd guy on Engine 1... New recruits want to be on apparatus not be stuck in dispatch and a huge way we are going to retain new membership is to 1.) Go back to a 42-hour work week 2.) Get rid of dispatching”

“New 911 phones, and change to have constant bell ring until phone is answered”

“Increased training”

“Continue with the scenario-based training that Weaver initiated with class 005. Also possibly downloading and playing audio files for new dispatchers of some of the more significant events over the last few years.”

“Turn it into a collateral position. Offer a longer training program”

“Recruit training to involve more than a few shifts. To become a quality dispatcher, they need to spend several weeks in the office to get acclimated to all levels of work in there. Also, develop multi levels of incidents as simulated calls to be completed before being approved to be on their own. This could also be done for other members of the department as a quarterly or semi-annual training for the private rank.”

“Perhaps more training time in dispatch. The people being trained may only spend three shifts in there. For some, those three shifts could be very busy and beneficial but for others, it may be very slow (call volume).”

“Confidence training for newer dispatchers”

“Give opportunity to go in for a shift when you want to be able to stay sharp and keep up with new happenings in fao, without having to do a 30-day transfer”

“Put some questions on the entrance exams”

“Find other means of staffing for North Kingstown fire alarm due to employee turnover and burnout.”

“During business hours, fire alarm technicians calling radio boxes out of service for maintenance, or quarterly tests overwhelm the fire alarm operators. The fire alarm operator is responsible for answering the phone for 911 calls and dispatching them out to appropriate companies. emergency operations become more difficult the more non-emergency calls the dispatcher has to handle. example: If an alarm technician has 12 quarterly tests to do at an apartment complex, to handle those radio boxes is a minimum of 24 phone calls. A second dispatcher would help alleviate the workload and better the quality of communications.”

“New recruits receive 3 days of training during what we call "ride time." In some cases, the recruits pick up the day to day operations, and duties of a dispatcher. In other cases, the recruits need more training than the 3 days. This training in some cases was extended 2-3 weeks. If there were two fire alarm operators in fire alarm. The recruit can be assigned to fire alarm with another fire alarm operator who is at a high competency level. The second operator can assist the recruit and reinforce the duties of a fire alarm operator.”

“Having two dispatchers in fire alarm would improve the communications, and distribute workload more appropriately. On high call volume days one dispatcher can take all the fire alarm technicians calls, while the other dispatcher is taking emergency calls, and focus on radio traffic.”

“If there was a superintendent (supervisor, communications director, whatever name of position) of fire alarm, it would help with the direction and supervision of fire alarm. If there was a supervisor of fire alarm, they could deal with SOGs, radio issues, CAD software issues, training, and our quality of communication. Often times between shifts things in fire alarm are done differently due to different preferences. If there was a supervisor, they could enforce the SOGs and communication issues.”

“I think in order for Fire Alarm to be consistent, there should only be one instructor for that duty, as well as one Captain or Deputy that oversees that position. I feel like multiple instructors do not help, and no accountability to anyone, until something is bad, then coaching becomes more difficult”

“More Training on failed equipment.”

“Every dispatcher is offered to seek national dispatcher training.”

“More outside training”

“More time in fire alarm”

“Time and calls on the desk are most of the important.”

“It should not be a junior position by default. It should be filled by experience fire personal (collateral or other means) or civilian trained personal, in hopes to build up a continuity of service from year to year. Instead of having an inexperienced dispatcher rotating through every year or so.”

“No”